



One thing is for certain — elder abuse can happen to any older individual in any community. Elder abuse can occur anywhere — in the home, in nursing homes or other institutions.

Types of Elder Abuse*

- **Physical abuse** – Use of force to threaten or physically injure a vulnerable elder
- **Emotional abuse** – Verbal attacks, threats, rejection, isolation or belittling acts that cause or could cause mental anguish, pain or distress to a senior
- **Sexual abuse** – Sexual contact that is forced, tricked, threatened or otherwise coerced upon a vulnerable elder, including anyone who is unable to grant consent
- **Exploitation** – Theft, fraud, misuse or neglect of authority, and use of undue influence as a lever to gain control over an older person's money or property
- **Neglect** – A caregiver's failure or refusal to provide for a vulnerable elder's safety, or physical or emotional needs
- **Abandonment** – Desertion of a frail or vulnerable elder by anyone with a duty of care
- **Self-neglect** – An inability to understand the consequences of one's own actions or inaction, which leads to, or may lead to, harm or endangerment ■

** Taken from the National Center on Elder Abuse*

>> where you could see through to his spinal column.

"He was demented, so we couldn't get a statement from him, and he couldn't articulate if he was aware of it," Fogel said.

When Fogel interviewed the wife, she told him about how abusive her husband had been to her.

"She said, 'I know I should have done this and that, but I was thinking about how abusive he was to me, so I let him suffer,'" John said, recalling the woman's story. "She didn't get locked up because the ... attorney thought that if we put her on the stand, any woman who has ever been abused before will sympathize with her. She could have been lying, but we won't know because I couldn't talk to [her husband]."

HOME ALONE

Other cases of elder abuse don't come at the hands of anyone, but instead are sad reminders that often the elderly reach a point where they cannot and should not care for themselves. When an individual is found in deplorable conditions, but there is no caretaker or family member responsible for their care, it is called self-neglect. Self-neglect is not a criminal act, but when officers come across these types of cases, they can call Adult Protective Services, which can offer resources to the individual and get them the necessary help.

"We like to encourage families to be involved in their loved ones' lives," Thornsberry said. "Just like with kids — you have to stay involved in kids' lives — as their parents age, they need to be involved in their parents' lives. If they haven't seen them for two or three months, as they get older, the chances things might happen get greater. They need to check in on them — on a daily basis would be best."

The detectives of Louisville's Crimes Against Seniors Unit spend some of their time giving talks to various groups about what they do in the unit and what types of crimes are happening to seniors.

WHEN THE HELP ISN'T HELPING

Often when family members know that their loved ones are no longer capable of caring for themselves, they will opt to place them in a full-time care or assisted-living facility. There is the natural assumption that their loved one will receive the necessary care in the facility that they cannot provide them because of a lack of time, knowledge or resources. And there are numerous facilities across the commonwealth in which senior citizens receive exceptional care and treatment from a compassionate and knowledgeable staff. Unfortunately, that is not always the case.

Between December 2006 and 2009, 107 serious citations were issued by the Office of the Inspector General to nursing homes in Kentucky. Those citations involved cases of sexual assault by staff members on residents, negligence and failure to act in a timely manner that resulted in severe injury or death and physical abuse of residents. However, these cases are often hard to work and hard to prosecute. Few nursing home employees are ever convicted of crimes when a resident is hurt or dies because of abuse or neglect and fewer still go to prison, a July 2010 Herald-Leader article states.

"You have to be able to build a case around a victim that may or may not be able to help you," Thornsberry said.

Research indicates that more than one in 10 elders may experience some type of abuse, but only one in five cases or fewer are reported. This means that very few